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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT: TRANSPARENCY IN ARMAMENTS

Report on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development

Report of the Secretary-General

1. In its resolutions 49/75 C of 15 December 1994, 50/70 D of 12 December 1995 and 51/45 H of 10 December 1996, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts, on the continuing operation of the Register of Conventional Arms and its further development, taking into account the report of the Disarmament Commission at its 1996 session on the subject of international arms transfers, the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the views expressed by Member States and the 1994 report of the Secretary-General on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development (A/49/316), with a view to a decision by the Assembly at its fifty-second session.

2. Pursuant to those resolutions, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Assembly the report on the continuing operation of the Register of Conventional Arms and its further development.

* A/52/150 and Corr.1.

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ANNEX

Report on the continuing operation of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and its further development

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FOREWORD BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

At the time of its establishment in 1992, the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms was considered a ground-breaking endeavour in international efforts to promote openness and transparency in military matters. I believe that the Register, as part of a range of international efforts, continues to be an important tool in helping to prevent an excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms and in providing a valuable input into bilateral and regional dialogues on security concerns. In a world in which security in isolation is no longer possible, there are potent reasons for maintaining a large measure of transparency in matters related to defence policies and armaments - one of the most important being minimizing the risk of misunderstanding or miscalculation in military matters, thus contributing to the development of trust and more stable relations among States.

Five years after the establishment of the Register, it is time to take stock and to review once again the scope of and participation in the Register. In this context, I welcome the work of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms on its recently completed, and unanimously adopted report on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development. That report took into account the report of the Disarmament Commission on its 1996 session on the subject of international arms transfers, the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the views expressed by Member States and the 1994 report on the continuing operation and further development of the Register.

Since 1992, over 90 Governments have reported annually on their international transfers in the seven categories of conventional arms in the Register. I am encouraged by the continuing commitment of those States in reporting regularly to the Register. Through the participation of both exporter and importer States, the bulk of international trade in these major conventional weapons systems has been covered. At the same time, participation in the Register has not yet reached the desired goal of universality. There remains a significant variation among regions where the relevance of the Register to the security interests of component States has yet to be determined, or where other weapons-related or equipment-related measures not covered by the Register are particularly important in addressing the whole spectrum of security concerns. Nonetheless, wider participation by Governments, especially in certain regions and subregions, is of paramount importance if the Register is to be further consolidated.

I am encouraged that support for the Register through regional arrangements and agencies has continued to grow and that the global Register has been complemented by regional and subregional efforts to promote a higher degree of openness and transparency in military matters, while taking into account the legitimate security interests of States.

For the Register to fulfil its potential, it is important not only to increase participation therein, but also to expand its scope. This goal has been reinforced by the increasing number of Governments voluntarily reporting on military holdings and procurement through national production. I encourage

Member States to continue to follow this promising trend. In this context, I hope Member States will give positive consideration to the recommendation contained in the Group's report that they should make public their information on military holdings and procurement through national production in the categories covered by the Register by including it in the annual consolidated report to the Register.

I also support the recommendation that a full review of the operation and further development of the Register should be conducted and that the General Assembly should decide at an early date on the appropriate timing for such reviews.

In its recommendations, the Group envisages a number of activities to be undertaken by the United Nations. I wish to emphasize that the Secretariat stands ready to provide all possible assistance in further promoting the aims of the Register, with a view to achieving universal participation in this important instrument.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the members of the Group of Governmental Experts for their work in preparing this report, which I commend to the General Assembly for its consideration.

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

15 August 1997

Sir,

I have the honour to submit herewith the report of the Group of Governmental Experts on the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, which was convened by you in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 49/75 C of 15 December 1994, 50/70 D of 12 December 1995 and 51/45 H of 10 December 1996.

The governmental experts appointed were the following:

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The report was prepared between March and August 1997, during which the Group held three sessions in New York, the first from 3 to 7 March 1997, the second from 16 to 27 June 1997 and the third from 4 to 15 August 1997.

The members of the Group wish to express their appreciation for the assistance they received from members of the Secretariat of the United Nations. In particular, they wish to thank Mr. Prvoslav Davinic, Director, Centre for Disarmament Affairs, Mrs. Hannelore Hoppe, who served as Secretary of the Group, and Mr. Terence Taylor who served as consultant to the Group.

I have been requested by the Group of Experts, as its Chairman, to submit to you, on its behalf, the present report which was unanimously adopted.

(Signed) Rafael M. Grossi
Chairman of the Group of Governmental
Experts on the United Nations Register
of Conventional Arms

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Establishment of the Register

1. The General Assembly, by resolution 46/36 L of 9 December 1991, entitled "Transparency in armaments", requested the Secretary-General to establish and maintain at United Nations Headquarters the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and set out the arrangements for the consideration of its development. The Assembly called upon all Member States to provide annually for the Register data on imports and exports of conventional arms in the seven categories covered under the Register. The Assembly invited Member States, pending the expansion of the Register, also to provide to the Secretary-General, with their annual report on imports and exports of arms, available background information regarding their military holdings, procurement through national production and relevant policies, and requested the Secretary-General to record that material and to make it available for consultation by Member States at their request.

2. In resolution 46/36 L, the Assembly recalled that the implementing of confidence-building measures, including transparency and exchange of relevant information on armaments, was likely to reduce the occurrence of dangerous misperceptions about the intentions of States and to promote trust among them. Furthermore, it considered that increased openness and transparency in the field of armaments could enhance confidence, ease tensions, strengthen regional and international peace and security and contribute to restraint in military production and the transfer of arms. The Assembly declared its determination to prevent the excessive and destabilizing accumulations of arms, including conventional arms, in order to promote stability and strengthen regional or international peace and security, taking into account the legitimate security needs of States and the principle of undiminished security at the lowest possible level of armaments.

B. Developments since 1991

1992 Panel

3. In accordance with Assembly resolution 46/36 L, the Secretary-General convened a panel of governmental technical experts in 1992. The tasks of the Panel were to assist the Secretary-General:

(a) To elaborate the technical procedures and to make any adjustments to the annex to resolution 46/36 L necessary for the effective operation of the Register;

(b) To prepare a report on the modalities for early expansion of the scope of the Register by the addition of further categories of equipment and the inclusion of data on military holdings and procurement through national production.

The Assembly, by resolution 47/52 L of 15 December 1992, endorsed the report of the Secretary-General containing the recommendations of the Panel (A/47/342), called upon all Member States to provide the requested data and information to the Secretary-General by 30 April annually, beginning in 1993, and encouraged Member States to inform the Secretary-General of their national arms import and export policies, legislation and administrative procedures, both as regards authorization of arms transfers and prevention of illicit transfers. in conformity with paragraph 18 of its resolution 46/36 L. Subsequent resolutions of the General Assembly reiterated that request.[1] The Panel also recommended that the consolidated annual report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the data registered and the available background information submitted by Member States be open to the public.

1994 Group of Governmental Experts

4. In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 46/36 L, 47/52 L and 48/75 E of 16 December 1993, the 1994 Group of Governmental Experts was established to report on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development. The report of the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Group (A/49/316) was taken note of by the Assembly in resolution 49/75 C of 15 December 1994. By the same resolution, the General Assembly decided to keep the scope of and participation in the Register under review and, to that end, requested Member States to provide the Secretary-General with their views on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development and on transparency measures related to weapons of mass destruction.

1997 Group of Governmental Experts

5. By resolution 51/45 H of 10 December 1996, the General Assembly reiterated its request to the Secretary-General, with the assistance of a group of governmental experts to be convened in 1997, to prepare a report on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, taking into account the report of the Disarmament Commission at its 1996 session on the subject of international arms transfers, the work of the Conference on Disarmament, the views expressed by Member States and the 1994 report of the Secretary-General on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, with a view to a decision at its fifty-second session.

6. Accordingly, the Group noted the work undertaken by the Disarmament Commission which had adopted, in 1996, guidelines for international arms transfers.[2] Among other things, the guidelines recommend that States institute national measures to prevent illicit trafficking in arms, including strengthening national laws and regulations and establishing effective import and export licensing procedures. The Group also took account of the views of Member States given in response to General Assembly resolutions 49/75 C, 50/70 D and 51/45 H, and which are contained in documents A/50/276 and Add.1, A/51/300 and Add.1-5 and A/52/312.

7. The 1997 Group of Governmental Experts took account of the reports of the 1992 Panel and the 1994 Group and the related General Assembly resolutions, as well as the current global and regional security situation, and reaffirmed the role of the Register as a confidence-building measure designed to improve

security relations among States. In that context, it was recalled that, by resolution 46/36 L, the Assembly considered that an enhanced level of transparency in armaments could contribute to confidence-building and security among States. The establishment of the Register, as part of a broader range of international efforts to promote transparency in military matters, was a step in that direction and could prevent an excessive and destabilizing accumulation of arms. The Group reaffirmed that participation in the Register is a means through which States can signal their preparedness to enter into dialogue with other States on this aspect of security policy. This can provide a valuable input into bilateral and regional dialogues on security concerns and the evolution of a more cooperative approach to security. In that context, the Group underlined that the Register is not a control mechanism but a confidence-building measure designed to improve security relations among States.

8. In considering the development of the Register, the Group took full account of the relationship between transparency and the security needs of States. With this requirement in view, the Group recognized that the Register should not be seen in isolation but be regarded as a confidence-building instrument which deals with a part of a wide spectrum of issues relating to weapons as well as aspects of regional and international security. Taking account of the views submitted by Member States to the Secretary-General, as called for in the relevant General Assembly resolutions, and those raised in its discussions, the Group observed that, notwithstanding that the Register deals with conventional weapons, the principle of transparency could also apply, in conjunction with other measures, to weapons of mass destruction and to transfers of high technology with military applications, as reflected in the provisions of various relevant legal instruments and in the founding resolution 46/36 L.

9. The Group also noted the work on small arms and light weapons carried out by the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms set up by the Secretary-General in accordance with Assembly resolution 50/70 B of 12 December 1995.

II. REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF THE REGISTER

A. General

10. In the course of its deliberations, the Group had at its disposal the data and information submitted by Governments for the Register by 15 August 1997 for the calendar years 1992 to 1996 inclusive. The Group also had before it the views of Member States on the operation of the Register, submitted in response to Assembly resolution 46/36 L and subsequent resolutions. In the light of this data and information, the Group reviewed the operation of the Register with a view to making recommendations for enhancing its operation and further development.

B. Extent of participation

11. The Group noted that in each of the four calendar years of operation of the Register over 90 Governments had submitted reports. The number of Governments submitting reports for the years 1992-1996 is:

1992	1993	1994	1995	1996 (As at 15 August 1997)
94	93	97	96	81

The Group was encouraged to note that the level of participation remained one of the highest compared with similar international reporting instruments, such as the United Nations system for the standardized reporting of military expenditures. It was observed that not all Governments that had submitted reports had participated each year. The Group took account of the fact that, so far, 138 Governments had participated at least once by reporting. Of the 185 States Members of the United Nations, 49 had never submitted a report. Of the 49, at least 10 in each year were reported by other States as either an importer or an exporter.

12. In some cases, States not reporting did not possess the equipment covered by the seven categories in the Register. Nevertheless, it was noted that many States that had neither imported nor exported equipment covered by the Register, had submitted "nil" reports. The Group noted with satisfaction that this practice, which was an expression of support for the Register, had continued throughout the period under review. There remained, however, a number of States that had not yet participated in the Register by submitting a "nil" report.

13. Taking account of the need to enhance the utility of the Register, the Group was concerned that the goal of universal participation had not yet been reached but was encouraged by the trend in participation. The Group noted, however, that the level of reporting varied from region to region and that the pattern remained consistent throughout the reporting years. Participation by region, based on United Nations regional groupings, is as follows:

Region	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996 (As at 15 August 1997)
African States	12 of 51	13 of 52	10 of 53	9 of 53	7 of 53
Asian States	23 of 47	25 of 47	26 of 48	27 of 48	18 of 48
Eastern European States	14 of 19	13 of 20	15 of 21	16 of 21	13 of 21
Latin American and Caribbean States	17 of 33	15 of 33	18 of 33	14 of 33	13 of 33
Western European and Other States	24 of 24	24 of 27	25 of 27	26 of 27	26 of 27
Not Members of a regional group	3 of 5	2 of 5	2 of 3	2 of 3	2 of 3

It should be noted that the above table includes Member States only. Thus, the submissions of the Governments of Switzerland (an Observer State) and the Cook Islands are not included. In all other tables they are included.

C. Reports on exports and imports

14. The Group observed that the number of States reporting exports and imports remained stable throughout the period under review. The number of Governments reporting, including those which submitted "nil" reports on exports or imports, in the years 1992-1996 is as follows:

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996 (As at 15 August 1997)
Exports					
Transfers reported	24	24	22	22	25
"Nil" reports	53	59	68	64	51
Imports					
Transfers reported	38	31	42	43	36
"Nil" reports	47	57	50	52	41

15. It was noted that a number of States, reported as an exporter or importer by participating States, did not make any report for the Register. On average, 11 States fell into that category; they were not the same States in every year.

D. Reports on additional background information

16. The number of States reporting additional background information, in accordance with paragraph 10 of resolution 46/36 L, has increased over the first five years of reporting with regard to information on procurement through national production and military holdings. Under the terms of the resolution, States are invited (rather than called upon which is the case for arms transfers) to provide such information. They can submit the information in any form they wish. With very few exceptions, participating States reported on the seven categories covered by the Register, providing information on procurement through national production and military holdings. Of the Governments that have reported, eight reported on weapons not within the categories covered by the Register. The Group observed that many States reported national policies only once and thereafter reported only changes or additions as they occurred. The overall pattern of reporting of available background information is as follows:

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996 (As at 15 August 1997)
Holdings	23	25	25	27	30
Procurement through national production	15	18	20	19	25
National policies	31	19	14	14	13

E. Assessment of reporting

17. In reviewing the first five calendar years of the operation of the Register, the Group welcomed the continuing commitment of States reporting to the Register on a regular basis. Continuity of reporting was important not only to preserve the relevance of the Register, but also to provide a basis for any analysis of trends over time. The Group considered, however, that gaining wider participation in the Register was of high importance. Over 90 Governments have reported to the Register for each of the years 1992 to 1995 inclusive, thus the information provided by both exporters and importers covers the bulk of the trade in the seven categories covered by the Register. While this level of reporting is higher than other comparable reporting instruments, such as the United Nations system of standardized reporting of military expenditures, universality of participation would greatly enhance the value of the Register as a confidence-building measure. The Group considered that non-participation by several States may be due to political and bureaucratic reasons. Also, some States may not be convinced that the Register alone was relevant to their security concerns. Other reasons for non-participation may be a lack of resources or awareness of the operation of the Register. It was also noted that in some cases armed conflict situations or severe political crises hampered reporting.

18. An assessment of the data on reporting indicates that, among the States that have yet to report to the Register, there is a significant number which may not have imported or exported equipment in the seven categories in the Register in the five years of reporting to date. The Group reaffirmed the value of participation by the submission of "nil" reports since such reports helped to complete the overall picture of arms transfers and are a valuable form of participation in the confidence-building process provided by the Register. The Group believed that every effort should be made to encourage States to participate in the Register by submitting a "nil" report if they have neither imported nor exported equipment in the Register categories during the calendar year subject to reporting.

19. The Group observed that many of the reports to the Register were being submitted long after the due date of 30 April each year. Some States found it difficult, because of their particular situations, to submit their reports by the due date. To assist those States to prepare accurate reports, the Group agreed that it would be helpful to change the annual reporting date from 30 April to 31 May. Nevertheless, the Group considered it important that States reported promptly in order to enable the annual consolidated report on the Register to be prepared as soon as possible after the due date and in good time for consideration by the General Assembly. At present, some transfers are not being reported until more than a year after the event. Prompt reporting would enhance transparency by shortening the time lag in making such data available to all Member States.

20. In analysing reporting, the Group noted significant variations among regions. These variations follow a consistent pattern which could be related to the reasons mentioned in paragraph 17 above.

21. While the failure to report one side of a transfer constituted the major discrepancy during the period under review, the Group observed that mismatches continued to occur on details of transfers, such as the number of items transferred, the date of the transfer and the type of equipment. The Group believed that among the reasons for discrepancies in reporting of transfers were a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Register and its procedures, and limited availability of resources. The Group, however, considered that an important reason for some of those discrepancies could be the lack of a common definition of a transfer. This not only led to differing interpretations of whether or not a transfer had taken place but also of the timing of a transfer. Agreement on a common definition is complicated by differing national practices regarding the implementation of rules, regulations and procedures for exports and imports. At present the description of a transfer, given in the report of the 1992 Panel and reaffirmed by the 1994 Group,[3] remains the guideline for reporting transfers.

22. The Group observed that the number of participating States using the "Remarks" column in the reporting format to provide designations and descriptions of equipment transferred had increased over the five years of reporting. The "Remarks" column was designed by the 1992 Panel[4] to aid the understanding of international transfers by providing the opportunity, if States so wished, to report the designation, type or model of the equipment being transferred. The 1992 Panel also recommended that this column could also be

used to provide additional clarification of transfers, such as if the equipment were obsolete or the result of co-production. The number of Governments using the "Remarks" column to indicate types and models in reporting exports and imports is as follows:

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996 (As at 15 August 1997)
Exporters	15 of 24	16 of 24	17 of 22	19 of 22	23 of 25
Importers	26 of 38	24 of 31	34 of 42	35 of 43	32 of 36

23. The Group reaffirmed the view that use of the "Remarks" column helped in understanding the data provided. Not only did such information aid clarity but it also added a qualitative element to reporting if the models and types of equipment being reported were shown.

24. With regard to reporting on available background information, the Group noted the increase in reporting, in accordance with Assembly resolution 46/36 L, on military holdings and procurement through national production. It also noted that the overwhelming majority of reports provided data on the seven categories of the Register. The Group took account of those voluntary practices and considered that further dissemination of the information would be useful.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF THE REGISTER

A. General

25. By resolution 46/36 L, the Assembly initiated the process for future expansion of the scope of the Register by the addition of further categories of equipment and the inclusion of data on military holdings and procurement through national production. Modalities for such expansion were considered by the 1992 Panel which presented its findings to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session. The question of further development of the Register was discussed extensively by the 1994 Group of Experts on the continuing operation of the Register and its further development, but no agreement was reached on any of the proposals put forward. The 1994 Group proposed that the issue be kept under review.

26. In accordance with the mandate given by the Assembly in resolution 51/45 H and preceding resolutions, the 1997 Group examined various proposals to further develop the Register. Based on the premise that the objective must be to make the Register more efficient and effective, and to encourage wider participation, the Group discussed three different dimensions of the development of the Register:

(a) Adjustments and technical aspects of the categories of weapons covered by the Register, including the provision of qualitative information;

(b) Expansion of the scope to include data on military holdings and procurement through national production;

(c) Possible new categories and types.

27. In its consideration of adjustments and technical aspects of the categories covered by the Register, the Group studied the definitions of the existing seven categories to ascertain whether they still met the purpose of the Register. It also considered proposals for adding qualitative information in the reports on transfers.

28. As regards the expansion of the scope of the Register by including data on military holdings and procurement through national production, the Group noted that the Assembly, by resolution 46/36 L and succeeding resolutions, had reaffirmed its decision, with a view to future expansion of the Register, to keep the scope of and participation in the Register under review. The Group also noted that the 1994 Group of Experts had confirmed the goal of early expansion of the Register for that purpose. The Group considered a number of proposals and issues on reporting data and information on military holdings and procurement through national production.

29. In considering possible new categories and types, the Group discussed this issue in the context of both global and regional security concerns and the principle of transparency. Proposals and issues relating to weapons of mass destruction and the inclusion of small arms and light weapons were also considered.

B. Categories of weapons covered by the Register

Adjustments and technical aspects

30. Taking into account the findings of the review of the operation of the Register, the Group reviewed the present categories covered by the Register. The Group noted that, in general, the definitions of the categories of equipment were still satisfactory. The provision of qualitative information and adjustments in some of the categories were considered in order to determine whether such improvements could increase participation in the Register, as well as the value and clarity of the data and information being reported.

(a) Adjustments of categories

31. The Group studied the existing definitions of the categories of equipment (see appendix I) and analysed from a technical standpoint the following proposed adjustments:

(a) In category III, lowering the calibre of artillery systems from 100 millimetres to 75 millimetres;

(b) In category VI, lowering the tonnage of warships from 750 metric tonnes to 400 metric tonnes;

(c) In category VII, disaggregating missiles and missile launchers;

(d) In category VII, lowering the range of missiles from 25 kilometres to 10 kilometres and the inclusion of ground-to-air missiles.

The Group studied the implications of the proposed technical adjustments but could not reach agreement on such adjustments.

(b) Additional information on transfers

32. The "Remarks" column of the standardized reporting form was initially developed to offer Member States the opportunity to provide additional information on transfers, thus enhancing its qualitative aspect. As the provision of such information might be affected by security and other relevant concerns of Member States, the "Remarks" column was filled in at the discretion of a Member State. In 1992, no specific guidelines for providing such information were prescribed. The Group welcomed the increasing use of the "Remarks" column of the standardized reporting form to indicate designation, type or model of equipment in reporting exports and imports and expressed the hope that this trend would continue.

C. Expansion of the scope of the Register

33. By its resolution 46/36 L and subsequent resolutions, the General Assembly invited Member States, pending the expansion of the Register, also to provide to the Secretary-General, with their annual report on imports and exports of arms, available background information regarding their military holdings, procurement through national production and relevant policies.

34. The Group observed that there had been an increase in reporting on military holdings and procurement through national production over the five years of reporting, with the majority of those Member States reporting providing their information based on the seven categories in the Register.

35. The Group reaffirmed the goal of an early expansion of the Register by the inclusion of data on military holdings and procurement through national production but could not reach agreement on such inclusion on the same basis as for transfers. The Group agreed that further consideration of this issue was required.

36. The Group studied the question of the technical and practical aspects linked to the terms "military holdings" and "procurement through national production" for the purpose of the Register. The Group held a preliminary discussion of various points which may be helpful in future consideration of the issue. With regard to military holdings, either within or outside the territory of a State, it studied, inter alia, the types of organizations holding equipment, as defined in the categories covered by the Register, such as regular or active forces; reserve forces; paramilitary forces, including elements such as gendarmerie, coast guard and border guards; government-owned storage facilities in varying states of readiness; and facilities conducting repairs, overhauls, refits or modernization. With regard to procurement through national

production, the Group considered equipment, as defined in the seven categories:

(a) Assembled in commercial or state-owned facilities, on the territory of the reporting State, and delivered to the Government or one of its agencies as a complete item;

(b) Acquired from both licensed production and assembly of kits on national territory;

(c) Upgraded at national facilities which then fall into the Register categories;

(d) Acquisition from international collaborative projects.

D. Possible new categories and types

37. With regard to possible new categories and types of equipment, no new categories of conventional weapons were proposed for inclusion in the Register. The question of the relationship between the existing categories and possible new categories of equipment of conventional arms, including light weapons and small arms, was discussed, as was how that relationship could be of relevance to the purpose of the Register. In this context, the Group noted the work done by the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms.

38. In the context of the question of transparency in armaments, the Group considered a proposal to add a new category to the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms to include weapons of mass destruction. In its consideration of the proposal, the Group reviewed the nature of the Register, regional security concerns and the existing international legal instruments concerning the subject matter. The Group could not reach agreement on the proposal.

IV. REGIONAL ASPECTS

A. Overview

39. In resolution 46/36 L and subsequent resolutions, the General Assembly called upon Member States to cooperate at regional and subregional levels, taking fully into account the specific conditions prevailing in the regions or subregions, with a view to enhancing and coordinating international efforts aimed at increased openness and transparency in armaments.

40. As noted in chapter II above, the Group expressed concerns about the variation in the pattern of reporting among the regions. It welcomed the efforts made by regional organizations and arrangements, individual Member States and the United Nations Secretariat to promote participation in the Register. It believed that this effort should be continued in order to help achieve the ultimate goal of universal participation in the Register. It took account of the different conditions, recognizing that complementary confidence-building and security-building measures and other work to enhance security should take account of specific concerns and security perceptions. In that

context, the Group noted that other measures related to weapons and equipment not covered by the categories in the Register had particular importance in certain regions in ensuring that the whole spectrum of security concerns was taken into account, in particular in those regions in which the threat of military confrontation still exists. The Group noted that in certain instances the Register had a beneficial influence in stimulating activities in relation to confidence-building measures and discussions on regional security.

B. Support of the Register through regional arrangements and agencies

41. In the Asia and Pacific region, members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum agreed, at the Foreign Ministers meeting held at Jakarta on 23 July 1996, to work together to promote a higher level of participation in the Register. In particular, on a voluntary basis, they agreed to circulate to each other their reports to the Register at the time they are submitted.

42. The General Assembly of the Organization of American States (OAS), in its resolution 1409 of 7 June 1996, requested the members of OAS to send their submissions to the Register also to the Secretary-General of OAS by 15 May each year. At its twenty-seventh regular session, the OAS General Assembly confirmed the consensus among member States on the implementation of confidence-building measures which included, in particular, transparency and exchange of information on arms, and called upon the Permanent Council to consider the desirability of approving a legal framework on the issue of advance notification of major arms acquisitions covered by the Register.

43. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), in its principles governing conventional arms transfers agreed upon by the Forum for Security Cooperation on 16 July 1997 (FSC.DEC/13/97), called for support for and commitment to provide the data and information required by General Assembly resolution 46/36 L in order to ensure the effective implementation of the Register of Conventional Arms.

44. As expressed in its views to the Secretary-General on the continuing operation and further development of the Register (see A/52/312), States members of the European Union and associated countries continued to encourage all States Members of the United Nations to submit their national data to the Register.

45. Support for the Register has been promoted through the meetings of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The States members of the Advisory Committee further agreed to other complementary measures in the field of confidence-building and transparency, such as the monitoring of weapons acquisitions and transfers in Central Africa with a view to their control and reduction (see A/51/287). States of West Africa under the programme for coordination and assistance on disarmament and security are engaged in arms control and transparency measures with regard to the acquisition and transfer of conventional arms.

46. The General Assembly has also taken action relevant to the regional context. In resolution 51/50 of 10 December 1996 on strengthening security and cooperation in the Mediterranean region, the Assembly encouraged all States of the region to favour the necessary conditions for strengthening the confidence-building measures among them by promoting genuine openness and transparency on all military matters by, inter alia, providing accurate data and information to the Register. Similar encouragement had been called for by the Assembly in its resolutions 49/81 of 15 December 1994 and 50/75 of 12 December 1995.

C. Enhancing implementation at the regional level

47. The Group felt that regional and subregional efforts should be encouraged. They may pave the way towards a higher degree of openness, confidence and transparency in a region, thereby promoting greater participation in the Register. The Group also believed that such regional efforts should complement, and not detract from, the operation of the universal and global Register.

V. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGISTER

A. Reporting methods

48. It was considered important to retain simplicity in the operation of the Register and to examine areas that would facilitate participation through clear procedures and understanding of definitions.

49. The Group observed that, for many States, national policies of relevance to the Register may not change every year. To add clarity to reporting on national policies in additional background information it may, however, be helpful if States indicated on the reporting form either "no change" or changes, if applicable. The Group considered, once a report had been made, only substantive changes to national policies of relevance to the Register should be reported.

B. Contacts among Member States

50. The Group believed that, in order to resolve possible discrepancies in the data submitted by exporters and importers, direct contacts to clarify matters were important. To that end, the Group considered that the appointment of an official, national point of contact would help to clarify misunderstanding. The point of contact could deal with queries arising from the report.

C. Access to data and information reported

51. The widest possible access by Member States to the data and information stored in the Register database is important in order to enhance the value of the Register as a tool to build confidence in security matters. This could be achieved in a number of ways, including the use of electronic means, as appropriate.

D. Role of the United Nations Secretariat

52. The Centre for Disarmament Affairs carries out the mandate assigned to the United Nations Secretariat, which is to:

(a) Compile information and data from the reports of Governments to the Register for the consolidated annual report submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly;

(b) Collate the available background information provided by Member States and compile an index;

(c) Maintain and operate an electronic database of the data and information provided to the Register.

The Group expressed satisfaction at the manner in which the Centre for Disarmament Affairs had carried out the mandate entrusted to the Secretariat. The Group noted the importance of the role of the Secretariat in giving advice to Member States, when requested, on technical aspects of completing reports to the Register and in clarifying technical ambiguities in reports submitted. To enhance participation, timely reporting to the Register as well as timely preparation of the annual consolidated report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, the Group believed that it was important that the Secretariat play a role in promoting awareness of the Register and the procedures for reporting. The Group also supported the efforts of the Secretariat to improve Government access to the Register through the use of modern means of communication. Improvement of public access, as appropriate, to the annual reports of the Secretary-General on the Register was also welcomed.

53. The Group commended the Centre for its efforts to organize and participate in a number of regional workshops undertaken with the support of Member States. Since 1993, such workshops had been held for States of the Asia-Oceania region, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and the Middle East. For States from Central Africa, a workshop was held at Brazzaville under the aegis of the Standing Advisory Committee for Security Questions in Central Africa in March 1995. In February 1996, a workshop on the Register for the Asia and Pacific region was held in conjunction with the eighth annual conference of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific at Kathmandu. At a special meeting held by the Committee on Hemispheric Security of the OAS Permanent Council in April 1996, the United Nations Secretariat provided advice on the reporting requirements to the Register. The Group underlined the value of the information material published by the Centre for Disarmament Affairs in order to promote understanding of the objectives and purposes of the Register and of the reporting requirements.

E. Future review of the Register

54. The Group considered it important that periodic reviews of the continuing operation of the Register and its further development be conducted. The Group recommended that the General Assembly decide at an early date on the appropriate time for such reviews.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

55. The Group concluded that the record of participation in the Register showed a consistent level of participation, with over 90 States reporting in each of the first four years. Nevertheless, there were wide variations in the levels of reporting among regions. To move towards the goal of universal participation, more Member States should be encouraged to participate on a regular basis. In particular, the Group reaffirmed the importance of participation in the Register through the provision of "nil" reports, where applicable. The Group concluded that such reporting was important in order to provide as complete a picture as possible of the transactions in equipment covered by the Register.

56. Noting the increasing number of States indicating designations, models or types in reporting transfers of equipment, the Group concluded that the reports containing this information added qualitatively to the data and information in the Register and encouraged States in a position to do so to provide such information.

57. Having studied the implications of possible technical adjustments to the existing categories of the Register, the Group could not reach agreement on such adjustments.

58. Taking account of the security situation in the various regions, the Group considered the expansion of the scope of the Register to include the reporting of military holdings and procurement through national production, at the same level of commitment as transfers, but could not reach agreement. Nevertheless, the Group reaffirmed the goal of early expansion of the Register and welcomed the increasing number of States voluntarily reporting on military holdings and procurement through national production.

59. After consideration of all proposals for possible new categories and types to be added to the Register, the Group could not reach agreement on those proposals.

60. To assist States in the preparation of accurate reports to the Register, the Group concluded that the due date for reporting each year should be changed from 30 April to 31 May. The Group, however, stressed the importance of prompt reporting in order to facilitate early dissemination of the data and information for Governments and in particular in time for submission to the General Assembly.

61. As a contribution towards the goal of universal participation, the Group concluded that the promotion of understanding of the Register should be maintained and, where possible, increased. The Group considered that such efforts could be conducted by Member States individually, or collectively through regional arrangements and agencies.

62. To assist in achieving more efficient reporting, and to help in clarification of submissions, the Group concluded that Member States should designate an official point of contact for Governments on matters directly

relating to reporting to the Register. To facilitate the clarity of submissions, Member States should be encouraged to explain their national criteria for defining a transfer in their annual reports. If they have voluntarily supplied information on national policies, the Group believed that it would be helpful if reporting States indicated in subsequent reports whether or not there has been a significant change in these policies. It also concluded that the role of the United Nations Secretariat in the dissemination of knowledge and operation of the Register should continue to be supported.

63. In order to further develop the Register, as called for in Assembly resolution 46/36 L and subsequent resolutions, the Group concluded that a further comprehensive review, at an appropriate time, of the operation of the Register will be needed.

B. Recommendations

64. The Group recommends that:

(a) Member States participate in the Register with a view to achieving the shared goal of universal participation in this instrument;

(b) Member States be reminded of the importance of participating in the Register, both in reporting data and information and in making "nil" reports on exports and imports;

(c) Member States nominate a national point of contact for matters connected with the Register and that details on the contact point be sent with the annual report on the understanding that this information will be held by the Secretariat and provided on request to Governments only; furthermore, the Secretariat should maintain an updated list of national points of contact and circulate it to all Member States;

(d) The annual due date for reporting be changed from 30 April to 31 May but that Member States should be encouraged to report promptly in order to help ensure the early dissemination to Governments of the data and information in the reports;

(e) The existing reporting format and explanatory notes continue to be used but amended to take account of the recommendation in subparagraph (c) above, to note the national definitions of a transfer and to indicate changes in national policies, as shown in appendix II;

(f) Member States in a position to do so should make use of the "Remarks" column in the standardized reporting form to provide additional information, such as types or models;

(g) The General Assembly request the Secretary-General to ensure sufficient resources are made available to operate and maintain the Register and to:

(i) Make every effort to assist Governments with timely reporting and to improve access by Governments to the data and information provided to the Register;

(ii) Send annually notes to Member States encouraging them to participate in the Register and to provide any other additional information, as required;

(iii) Continue to provide to the General Assembly the annual consolidated report of data and information registered, including that provided on a voluntary basis on military holdings and procurement through national production, together with an index of other additional background information. States providing data on military holdings and procurement through national production may request that this data not be published;

(iv) Organize seminars and workshops, with the support of Member States, to promote understanding of the Register;

(v) When requested, support regional efforts with advice and expertise to promote participation in the Register;

(vi) Update and add to existing material on all aspects of the operation of the Register and to ensure its widest possible dissemination;

(vii) Conduct informal briefing meetings in conjunction with the meetings of the First Committee of the General Assembly in order to promote understanding of the Register's reporting procedures;

(viii) Send complete sets of returns to the Government of each Member State;

(ix) Establish a more visible icon on the Register in the existing United Nations homepage.

(h) The General Assembly decide on the appropriate time to conduct a full review of the continuing operation of the Register and its further development at an early date.

Notes

[1] Resolutions 48/75 E of 16 December 1993 and 49/75 C of 15 December 1994.

[2] Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-first Session, Supplement No. 42 (A/51/42), annex I.

[3] See A/49/316, annex, para. 42.

[4] See A/47/342, annex, para. 19.

APPENDIX I

Categories of equipment and their definitions

I. Battle tanks

Tracked or wheeled self-propelled armoured fighting vehicles with high cross-country mobility and a high level of self-protection, weighing at least 16.5 metric tonnes unladen weight, with a high muzzle velocity direct fire main gun of at least 75 millimetres calibre.

II. Armoured combat vehicles

Tracked, semi-tracked or wheeled self-propelled vehicles, with armoured protection and cross-country capability, either: (a) designed and equipped to transport a squad of four or more infantrymen, or (b) armed with an integral or organic weapon of at least 12.5 millimetres calibre or a missile launcher.

III. Large-calibre artillery systems

Guns, howitzers, artillery pieces, combining the characteristics of a gun or a howitzer, mortars or multiple-launch rocket systems, capable of engaging surface targets by delivering primarily indirect fire, with a calibre of 100 millimetres and above.

IV. Combat aircraft

Fixed-wing or variable-geometry wing aircraft designed, equipped or modified to engage targets by employing guided missiles, unguided rockets, bombs, guns, cannons, or other weapons of destruction, including versions of these aircraft which perform specialized electronic warfare, suppression of air defence or reconnaissance missions. The term "combat aircraft" does not include primary trainer aircraft, unless designed, equipped or modified as described above.

V. Attack helicopters

Rotary-wing aircraft designed, equipped or modified to engage targets by employing guided or unguided anti-armour, air-to-surface, air-to-subsurface, or air-to-air weapons and equipped with an integrated fire control and aiming system for these weapons, including versions of these aircraft which perform specialized reconnaissance or electronic warfare missions.

VI. Warships

Vessels or submarines armed and equipped for military use with a standard displacement of 750 metric tonnes or above, and those with a standard displacement of less than 750 metric tonnes, equipped for launching missiles with a range of at least 25 kilometres or torpedoes with similar range.

VII. Missiles and missile launchers

Guided or unguided rockets, ballistic or cruise missiles capable of delivering a warhead or weapon of destruction to a range of at least 25 kilometres, and means designed or modified specifically for launching such missiles or rockets, if not covered by categories I through VI. For the purpose of the Register, this category:

(a) Also includes remotely piloted vehicles with the characteristics for missiles as defined above;

(b) Does not include ground-to-air missiles.

APPENDIX II

Reporting forms

ANNEX 1

Standardized form for reporting international transfers of conventional arms (exports)[a]

EXPORTS
Report of international conventional arms transfers
(according to United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/36 L)

Reporting country:_____

National point of contact:_____
(Organization, telephone, fax) (FOR GOVERNMENTAL USE ONLY)

Calendar year:_____

A	B	C	D[b]	E[b]	REMARKS[c]	
Category (I-VII)	Final importer State(s)	Number of items	State of origin (if not exporter)	Intermediate location (if any)	Description of item	Comments on the transfer
I. Battle tanks						
II. Armoured combat vehicles						
III. Large-calibre artillery systems						
IV. Combat aircraft						
V. Attack helicopters						
VI. Warships						
VII. Missiles and missile launchers[f]						

National criteria on transfers:_____

[a] [b] [c] [f] See explanatory notes.

The nature of information provided should be indicated in accordance with explanatory notes e and f.

/...

Explanatory notes

[a] Member States that do not have anything to report should file a "nil" report clearly stating that no exports or imports have taken place in any of the categories during the reporting period.

[b] International arms transfers involve, in addition to the physical movement of equipment into or from national territory, the transfer of title to and control over the equipment. Member States are invited to provide with their return a concise explanation of national criteria used to determine when an arms transfer becomes effective. (See paragraph 42 of the annex to document A/49/316.)

[c] In the "Remarks" column Member States may wish to describe the item transferred by entering the designation, type, model or any other information considered relevant. Member States may also wish to use the "Remarks" column to explain or clarify aspects relevant to the transfer.

[d] Multiple-launch rocket systems are covered by the definition of category III. Rockets qualifying for registration are covered under category VII. (See appendix I.)

[e] Check any of the following provided as part of your submission:

		Check
(i)	Annual report on exports of arms	-
(ii)	Annual report on imports of arms	-
(iii)	Available background information on military holdings	-
(iv)	Available background information on procurement through national production	-
(v)	Available background information on relevant policies and/or national legislation	-
(vi)	Other (please describe)	-

[f] When reporting transfers, which of the following criteria, drawn from paragraph 42 of the annex to document A/49/316, were used:

		Check
(i)	Departure of equipment from the exporter's territory	-
(ii)	Arrival of equipment in the importer's territory	-
(iii)	Transfer of title	-
(iv)	Transfer of control	-
(v)	Others (please provide brief description below)	-

ANNEX 2

Standardized form for reporting international transfers of conventional arms (imports)[a]

IMPORTS
Report of international conventional arms transfers
(according to United Nations General Assembly resolution 46/36 L)

Reporting country: _____

National point of contact: _____
(Organization, telephone, fax) (FOR GOVERNMENTAL USE ONLY)

Calendar year: _____

A	B	C	D[b]	E[b]	REMARKS[c]	
Category (I-VII)	Exporter State(s)	Number of items	State of origin (if not exporter)	Intermediate location (if any)	Description of item	Comments on the transfer
I. Battle tanks						
II. Armoured combat vehicles						
III. Large-calibre artillery systems						
IV. Combat aircraft						
V. Attack helicopters						
VI. Warships						
VII. Missiles and missile launchers[f]						

National criteria on transfers: _____

[a] [b] [c] See explanatory notes.

The nature of information provided should be indicated in accordance with explanatory notes e and f.

Explanatory notes

[a] Member States that do not have anything to report should file a "nil report" clearly stating that no exports or imports have taken place in any of the categories during the reporting period.

[b] International arms transfers involve, in addition to the physical movement of equipment into or from national territory, the transfer of title to and control over the equipment. Member States are invited to provide with their return a concise explanation of national criteria used to determine when an arms transfer becomes effective. (See paragraph 42 of the annex to document A/49/316.)

[c] In the "Remarks" column Member States may wish to describe the item transferred by entering the designation, type, model or any other information considered relevant. Member States may also wish to use the "Remarks" column to explain or clarify aspects relevant to the transfer.

[d] Multiple-launch rocket systems are covered by the definition of category III. Rockets qualifying for registration are covered under category VII. (See appendix I.)

[e] Check any of the following provided as part of your submission:

		Check
(i)	Annual report on exports of arms	-
(ii)	Annual report on imports of arms	-
(iii)	Available background information on military holdings	-
(iv)	Available background information on procurement through national production	-
(v)	Available background information on relevant policies and/or national legislation	-
(vi)	Other (please describe)	-

[f] When reporting transfers, which of the following criteria, drawn from paragraph 42 of the annex to document A/49/316, were used:

(i)	Departure of equipment from the exporter's territory	-
(ii)	Arrival of equipment in the importer's territory	-
(iii)	Transfer of title	-
(iv)	Transfer of control	-
(v)	Others (please provide brief description below)	-